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After the fall: Developing a conceptual script based model of shame in narratives of entrepreneurs in crisis!

Abstract

Purpose

Extant research in relation to the entrepreneurial process has tended to concentrate upon the entrepreneur as hero and other positive aspects of the process. Consequently, the darker sides of the entrepreneurial personality and enterprise culture such as the role of shame remain a relatively under researched facet of entrepreneurship theory. Despite this dearth of actual empirical studies, the negative aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour associated with the 'flawed hero model of entrepreneurship' are implicitly understood. These negative aspects include hubris, tragedy, narcissism, over-stretching, hedonism, personality disorders, status anxiety, self-centeredness, destructive relationships, alcoholism, suicide and the most heinous of all, business failure.

Design/methodology/approach

In this study, we consider the deeply social phenomenon of shame on the entrepreneur and his or her world by developing a conceptual model of shame. We analyse the social script of shame as found in novels and as found in real life newspaper reports of such epic tragedies using a chosen methodology of narrative analysis.

Findings

The world portrayed in narrative is very much a 'mans world' in which shame is a personal construct, a penance to be endured or ended and in the process a narrative script is developed. Shame is a deeply personal cognitive emotion easier to study in narrative than in person. From the stories of flawed heroes we construct a holistic model of possible entrepreneurial trajectories that take cognisance of wellbeing issues and cover the unspoken events that occur after a fall from grace. But why should we expect the story to end with the entrepreneur in crisis staring into the abyss.

Originality/value

Little work has been undertaken to explore entrepreneurial shame using both the entrepreneurship literature and narrative analysis.

Key words: Entrepreneurs in crisis, Entrepreneurial Shame, social scripts, narrative analysis

After the fall: Developing a conceptual script based model of shame in narratives of entrepreneurs in crisis!

1. Introducing the rationale behind the research

It has been written that entrepreneurship “...is a *perilous privilege, which the gods watch jealously waiting for the fatal flaw...*” (Millhauser, 1997). This statement resonates with us despite having been written by an award winning novelist and not an entrepreneurship scholar. Indeed, the flawed hero model of entrepreneurship has gained currency in contemporary popular literature, if not so in mainstream entrepreneurship theory. In the realms of academic research into entrepreneurship the tendency is to concentrate upon process and other positive aspects such as the entrepreneur as hero (Nicolson and Anderson, 2005). As a consequence, consideration of failure and other negative aspects such as shame - whether personal, or professional are anathema. Shame is a common emotion felt by entrepreneurs who fail (Begley and Tan, 2001) who suggest that to fail at any undertaking is to bring shame upon oneself. Failure may well be construed as an integral aspect of the learning process for becoming an entrepreneur as according to Burns (2007) the majority of small businesses started in any given year are doomed to fail within the year. Most of these rational businesspeople do not succumb to the tragic ‘self-destructive’ scripts associated with the flawed entrepreneurial personality model. However, a small number of mostly male entrepreneurs do follow a tragic script and overcome by guilt and shame, commit suicide, murder loved ones, go mad, or embark on destructive alcohol abuse from which recovery is slow and painful. Notwithstanding this, the darker sides to the entrepreneurial personality (and enterprise culture) such as shame

remain a relatively under researched facet of entrepreneurship theory making existing studies such as those of Warren (2007) into the role of shame in the entrepreneurial process a rarity. One method of engaging with narratives of shame is to (re)turn to fiction to better understand the negative aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour associated with the ‘flawed hero model’ in which the story ends with the entrepreneur in crisis staring into an abyss. In this study we seek to understand why there is this discrepancy between popular culture and mainstream entrepreneurship research and more importantly we discuss the implications for the individual entrepreneurs, their families, academia and society with the intention of developing a conceptual model of shame in an entrepreneurial setting.

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate an interesting and timely topic area – namely the role of shame in entrepreneurship. Shame is a moral and self-conscious emotion that is different from the basic emotions (Haidt, 2003; Tracy and Robins, 2004). This paper is therefore positioned within an emerging stream of research into ‘Affect’ in an entrepreneurial setting (see Shepherd, 2003; Goss, 2005; Shepherd, 2007). Affect research is well established in psychology as a general terminology that includes emotion, mood, and disposition (Barsade and Gibson, 2008). The role of affect in entrepreneurship has been delineated by Baron (2008) and others (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, and Drnovsek, 2009; Foo, In Press). Until recently, shame has rarely been investigated even in general affect research. This gap in the literature indicates that there is a need for social science research to create new knowledge based on existing theories or findings.

As it is an exploratory paper, based on narrative methodology no hypothesis are developed. The purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual model of shame as it relates to the entrepreneurial process to enable us as scholars to better understand the entrepreneurial process. To do so, it is necessary to review the literature on the deeply social phenomenon that is shame which necessitates consideration of the phenomenon of narrative scripts and the role such scripts play in influencing how shame is enacted in entrepreneurial settings. Much of the literature on shame is dated but nevertheless is still relevant. We begin by examining the literature on shame and tragedy drawing out links with narrative theory and methodology. From there, we analyse the social script of shame as found in novels to develop an understanding of the storied nature of shame as an event. We use novels as they tend to present ideal or reified forms of behaviour, in this case the affects of failure in the enterprise process.

Thereafter we briefly examine examples of shame as played out in real life and the media. From these readings we then develop a conceptual model of the role of shame in the entrepreneurial process. The model developed is based upon the concept of the narrative script because shame is a deeply personal cognitive emotion perhaps easier to study in narrative than in person and also because shame is a concept which a person may need to experience for it to have form and meaning. The constructed model can be used to map a number of possible entrepreneurial trajectories that take cognisance of wellbeing issues and cover the unspoken about events that occur after a fall from grace. The model thus has a multiple utility in that it will be of interest to academics and entrepreneurs. These pressures induced by the darker side of an entrepreneurial life are but an extension

of the hallowed themes and storylines expected in well constructed entrepreneur stories. As such this conceptual study focuses upon building a model or map of such threats and pressures in entrepreneurial life and acts as a counter balance to the fabled scripts and storylines we have come to associate with the entrepreneur. We are in effect “probing the entrepreneurs wound”¹.

2. Reviewing the literatures of shame and tragedy

2.1. Theorising shame

Shame is a deeply personal cognitive emotion defined in dictionary.com as “*The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonourable, improper and ridiculous, done by oneself or another...resulting in disgrace and ignominy*”². Thus shame is a bi-polar construct in that it is owned by self and others. From a theoretical perspective shame can be viewed from various disciplinary standpoints – 1) as a moral or theological dilemma as in being a social anxiety (Pattison, 2000); 2) as a psychological problem (Colby, 1977; Kauffman, 1989); or 3) as a sociological issue (Scheff, 2000). In all of these frameworks shame is viewed as being a psychopathology (Tangey, Wagner and Gramshaw, 1992) – as something to be overcome or treated. Thus shame is also an ontological state of being as well as being a submissive emotion triggered by social rejection (Lamb, 2004) and failure. Indeed, Ekman (2003: 32) talks of shame inducing feelings of ‘fundamental worthlessness’ resulting in a temporary loss of confidence. As

¹ In a BBC Radio 4 Documentary entitled *The Entrepreneurs Wound*, BBC business editor, Robert Peston profiled some of Britain's most successful business people concentrating on their traumatic childhood. He interviewed Sir Stuart Rose, Damon Buffini, Sir Gulam Noon, Vincent Tchenguiz and Professor Manfred Kets de Vries. The psychologically ‘wounded entrepreneur’ struggling against impending doom is a central facet of the entrepreneurial construct.

² As discussed at www.dictionary.com.

such shame, according to Tangney and Fisher, (1995) is a learned emotion which motivates individuals to conceal themselves or escape from shame – inducing interpersonal-situations (Lindsay-Hartz, 1984: 1995). Shame is related to the evaluation of self in the eyes of other (Lamb, 2004; Suls and Wills, 1991). For Muscalo and Fischer (1995) shame is related to a self appraisal of having failed to live up to idealised standards of worth. Therefore shame emerges where there is a disparity between honour and self-worth manifested as socially unacceptable. Nathanson (1992) refers to our compass of shame in which there are several possible consequences. These include embarrassed withdrawal from the situation, attacking ones-self, resorting to avoidance behaviour, or as is less common, attacking the bearer of stress or others whom one blames. The consequences of shame can last far beyond the episode itself because the shame associated with failure can affect the children of the failed father (Lansky, 1992). This brings the possibility of vicarious shame into play in which children and family share in a sense of failure by guilty association. Shame can also lead to a sense of confusion between personal and professional liability and often ends in tragedy.

2.2. Theorising hubristic tragedy

For Leech (1969: 68) tragedy is a form of writing concerned with the dramatic presentation of an ending visited upon persons of great reputation and prosperity and for Atkins (1943) it is a narrative of the fortunes and adversities of the heroic. Leech (1969: 30) observes that tragedy is linear and must run from happiness to misery, not vice versa. Simple and complex plots tell changes in the fortunes of heroes. This state of sad misfortune must be brought about, not by an act of vice or depravity but, by an error of

judgment on the part of the heroic victim. Tragedy is a pre-ordained learning process. For Richards (1934/1960: 246-7) it is the most general, all-accepting, all ordering experience known to man (sic). It is an emotive, cathartic process, which teaches by example, and encompasses great actions, heroic characters, passion, majestic sadness, bravery in times of distress. Tragedies are thus narratives of the virtuous in distress and involve dramatic sacrifice and heroic achievement, which must be publicly enacted or performed in unity with time and space. An appreciation of the critical literary idiom of tragedy is useful in decoding classical entrepreneurial stories, because tragedy and heroism go hand in hand. Tragedy involves the states of divine providence, and grace, and is associated with the qualities of stoicism, virtue, remoteness, isolation, admiration, awe, doom, quite dignity, pride, falling and tragic burdens. It follows distinctive processes of hubris, mimesis, harmatia, anagnorsis closely followed by peripety. Hubris or the adoption of excessive pride sets the scene for dramatic fall, followed by the mimesis or acting out of a heroic act and also harmatia. Leech (1969) describes harmatia as an error of judgment, or fatal imperfection, that lets tragedy in. Thereafter, an act of anagnorsis must occur in which the hero achieves a change from ignorance to knowledge in the form of a revelation of doom manifested for example in the Grail narrative, McElwee (2008) as Parsifal moves from 'unknowing' to 'knowing' fool. The hero then enters into a state of peripety, or sudden reversal, which comes with a shock and suffering (pathos). Sudden changes have greater impact. According to Ellis-Fermor (1945) it provides equilibrium or a sense of balance and a purifying sense of closure. In tragedy, we feel the inter-relation of character and circumstance as the hero contributes to his own downfall. For Levi (1986: 156-157) this momentum culminates with the loser becoming a hero and the tragic fall from grace.

Rockwell (1974: 49-58) appreciates the normative influence of tragedy upon people. For Rockwell, tragedies are devoted to heroic individuals who by excess of virtue become norm breakers. In such social dramas the villain must be cast out to restore parity. Tragedy relates to the destruction of a person of extraordinary merit through an excess leading to hubris (a pride encroaching on the Gods whose jealousy is aroused causing them to strike down the guilty). Here we see parallels with the writing of Millhauser (1997) that entrepreneurship may be a state of perilous privilege.

Hubris as excessive pride is a fabled entrepreneurial sin, making the parallels between tragedy as a genre and the classic entrepreneur story self-evident. The sin of hubris and the accompanying social script of hubristic payback may therefore not be unique to entrepreneur stories but may be grafted upon it from accepted moral convention. Heroic society requires the hero to excel, but not to excess. In tragedy, reference is made to the common man (shades of the working class entrepreneur and the poor-boy-made-good storyline) as tragic heroes become the people's victim. We have empathy with him as being one of us (Leech, 1969: 33). It is pertinent that Catano (2001: 54) suggests self destruction naturally results from self-making as part of the masculine psyche.³ Thus tragedies are easily adaptable dramatic writings, which as pre-determined scripts are a ready made genre upon which to graft the heroic entrepreneur.

2.3. Conceptualising shame in an entrepreneurial context

Research into the psycho-social concept of shame is not extensive in the entrepreneurship literature despite the fact that shame is often an unintended outcome of the hubris and

³ Heroines do not appear to self-destruct.

fall-from-grace storylines which form an integral of the genre of the tragic entrepreneur. Despite the hagiographic fog which surrounds the creation of entrepreneur, entrepreneurial behaviour is not always eulogised – for example, Kuratko and Goldsby (2004) in discussing corporate entrepreneurs highlight the existence of ‘entrepreneurial’ rogue middle managers prone to behaving unethically. Similarly, psychologist and entrepreneurship scholar Manfred Kets DeVries, (1967, 2004) has begun to articulate the darker side of the entrepreneurial personality and enterprise culture but negative aspects of the entrepreneurial process such as shame remain a relatively under researched facet of entrepreneurship theory. This may well be because of difficulties of research access, or out of respect to relatives of those suffering the after effects of shame. In relation to the darker side of the entrepreneurial personality, Kets de Vries (2004) argues that entrepreneurs do not necessarily have more personal problems than other people, nor do they inevitably have more personality disorders. Notwithstanding this, masculine entrepreneurs often have a reputation for fieriness, bad-temperedness, irascibility and being flighty. In a similar vein, Boulding (1987) argues that entrepreneurs must possess a certain amount of intemperance and Morrison (1983) talks of weaknesses, defects and failures in men. Indeed in an entrepreneurial context shame is seen as a masculine failing. There is no corresponding stigma in relation to the failure of women in business.

Other socio-cognitive aspects of human psychology influence entrepreneurial behaviour and emotions. For instance, Kernberg (1984) refers to severe personality disorders, including – Anti Social Personality Disorder; Narcissistic Personality Disorder (grandiosity, need for admiration and lack of empathy for others); and Obsessive

Compulsive Personality Disorder; but like shame there are few empirical or conceptual studies of these phenomenon relating to how they influence the entrepreneurial process. Person (1986) somewhat controversially noted that entrepreneurs share the trait characteristic of manipulateness with psychopaths. Moreover, Wright (1987) taking a psychodynamic perspective examined the concepts of shame and anti-social behaviours such as narcissism in men arguing that entrepreneurs and psychopaths share similar manipulative behavioural patterns. Irrespective of the veracity or researchability of these statements such issues are often glossed over in the hagiographic eulogies which surround the heroic entrepreneur. Granted we read of hard luck tales and the occasional cautionary tale, but then there is hardly a market for failure stories, unless they are of epic proportions.

Research interest into the emotional side of entrepreneuring is increasing as evidenced by the works of Goss (2005; 2005a). Goss highlighted the insights of Joseph Schumpeter into the sociological underbelly of entrepreneurship and posits a theory of entrepreneurial action where social interaction and human emotions are the key variables. Goss (2005) proffered an alternative to the dominant individualistic theories of entrepreneurship by developing Scheff's notion of the deference-emotion system to propose a theory of entrepreneurial conduct that emphasizes social interaction and emotion. Goss argued that in this model the emotions of pride and shame, produced by the giving and withholding of deference, can motivate action that resists the innovation-inhibiting effect of social sanctions. Thus Goss argues for a social basis for the generation and reproduction of entrepreneurial conduct which may explain why such behaviour is frequently volatile and

inconsistent in nature. Goss thus proposes that social situation, rather than individual facets or personality should be the starting point for fresh and potentially valuable insights into the nature of entrepreneurial behaviour. In this particular study social situation was not factored into the research design. In seeking to research shame in an entrepreneurial context we nevertheless seek to concentrate upon context and situation (in a narrated sense) and not upon personality. Hastings, et al (2000) discuss the concept of loss-of-face, which can result from a failure to meet family obligations or the failure of a business (or in another professional capacity) which leave the entrepreneur with significant feelings of shame or guilt. For Tantam (1998) failure to perform a role expectation and business failures can lead to high stress levels for entrepreneurs. Granovetter (2000) argued that for many entrepreneurs, a failure to meet obligations can lead to suicide or thoughts of suicide. Burt (1999) in his chapter on entrepreneurs, distrust and third parties examined the darker side of dense networks and the pressure of self imposed obligations on entrepreneurial behaviour. Entrepreneurial networks act as a channel and setting for the entrepreneurial activity and social situation as envisaged by Goss.

There are also cultural aspects to shame amongst entrepreneurs. According to Bearman (1991) Protestants have higher rates of suicide than Jews; entrepreneurs have higher rates than workers, and unmarried men are more likely to kill themselves than married men. There is a cultural dimension to suicide. The number of suicide incidents for farmers in India appears to run into the 1000s annually. For example in 2009 over 1,500 farmers in

the agricultural state of Chattisgarh committed suicide after being driven to debt by crop failure (Independent 2009).

Kaye (1996) extended the study of shame into the family business setting and likened workaholism to a disease. Kaye noted that in family business workaholism does not carry the stigma of shame.

In a business context, shame is often triggered by the onset of stress and by stressful situations which lead to a temporary crisis. The stressors may be internal triggers which cause external crisis. Thus a cognitive dissonance can result in meltdown, a loss of face and an inability to perform to expected standards and ultimately to shame. The following points can act as triggering mechanisms - Emotion and cognitions (internal) ; Early life experiences (internal and environmental); Bad parenting (internal and environmental); Relationships (internal and external); The work-family interface for entrepreneurs (internal and environmental); The challenges and the darker side of entrepreneurship (situational); The pressures and confrontations of entrepreneurial life (situational); Issues and demands on entrepreneur well-being (Situational); Role stress and burnout (internal); Entrepreneurial failure (internal, environmental and situational); and status hierarchies in men (Environmental). Forsyth (1992) discusses the link between personal business philosophies and individual feelings of guilt and shame. This discussion points to the importance of social setting to the emotional well-being of entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurial sin of hubris is often the triggering mechanism for the fall from grace as a perquisite for full blown emotional meltdown and is ultimately accompanied by

shame. However, not all hubris is tragic, nor entirely negative.⁴ The combined effect of the emotional seesaw can lead to a loss of confidence and a return to risk aversion and a fear of danger. This is not a good place to be for an entrepreneur and as this scenario is played back in the mind flashbacks can return the entrepreneur into a slough of despair. And the loss is not merely to reputation. Shame is a multi-faceted phenomena and the above issues can lead to a spiralling cycle of damaged personal, financial and social reputation and even to a loss of hard earned “entrepreneurial social capital” (Firkin, 2003). The cost can be financial in that it can lead to a loss of business, a loss of accrued property and status, a loss of home and a failed relationship as the entrepreneur and their family all come to terms with calamity as the story plays out.

2.4 Introducing the concept of narrative scripts in an entrepreneurial context

Tomkins (1963) and Nathanson (1994) refer to shame as being an example of an ‘innate affective script’. In a similar vein, Ekman (2003: 41) talks of “importing” emotionally charged “scripts” into situations which cause stress. There is a propensity to replay these scripts over and over again. For Ekman these scripts contain a cast of characters [heroes and villains] and a continuing plotline. This process enables an update of emotional biographies. Ekman (2003: 41) suggests that conventional wisdom in psychodynamic theories of personality that scripts are imported when people have unrealized feelings which are never satisfactorily resolved / expressed. Ekman (2003: 41) stresses that shame scripts distort reality causing emotional reactions. Lamb (2004: 26) refers to creating a

⁴ For example, Ekman (2003: 196) discusses the traditional Italian concept of ‘fiero’ as a positive emotion manifested as an intense family pride in success. Additionally, Ekman (2003: 197) refers to the Yiddish concept of ‘Naches’, which is a positive glow of pleasure induced by intense pride - the subject of ‘Naches’ is said to ‘Kvell’, or positively beam with intense pride and pleasure. The down side of this positivity is the German concept of ‘Schadenfreude’ which is the taking pleasure at the misfortune of others.

library of scripts from our affectual experience. Gibbons (1990) talks of internal and external self-help. Therefore shame is both an internalised and externalised behaviour. External shame takes the form of a negative judgement made by made by others about the self. According to Gilbert (1998) externalised shame takes the form of recognised social scripts such as the 'fall from grace' and this influences how one is seen by others. External shame scenarios result from a failure to create a positive image of oneself' in the eyes of others. Internalised shame is an emotion whereby one sees oneself as being bad, flawed or socially worthless (Cook, 1994; Gilbert, 1998). For Gilbert, the pain results from not meeting internalised ideals or standards. Shame is a genitive reference frame learned through early life experiences which are transferable to adult experiences.

Thus when an individual embarking on an entrepreneurial career path, experiences difficulties such as failure, inability to cope, or loss of face induced through exposure to difficult entrepreneurial experiences, shame and other learned social scripts such as embarrassment can automatically kick in. This is important because Ekman (2003: 62 / 64) stipulates that we are socialized into behaving in particular manners when faced with particular emotions and that these can influence our habits and behaviours. The significance of this is that habits are learned and operate automatically and in turn influence our temperament (our genetically based emotional disposition). It is widely accepted that the sociological concepts of introversion and extroversion influence entrepreneurial behaviour, with extroverts being more likely to display classic entrepreneurial tendencies and traits, than introverts. Ekman (2003: 2003) argues that extroverts are more attuned to their emotions than introverts because extroversion predisposes one to happiness and makes one less sensitive to rejection (Ekman suggests

this causes a better fit with American culture). Moreover, Ekman (2003: 217) argues that guilt, shame and embarrassment do not have universally readable signals thus it is easy to mask them from others. Conversely, for Ekman (2003: 58 / 59) fear, disgust and contempt are visible negative emotions which are difficult to mask. This is significant because it means that the onset of shame and related emotions are very difficult to spot and remedy in entrepreneurs whose *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* are characterised by extreme confidence. However, Keltner (1984) argues that because embarrassment is shown through a series of expressions over time via emotions and moods it can be detected if one knows the signs to look for.⁵ Thus in socially scripted encounters between the entrepreneur and their detractors the different protagonists will display different emotions and signs. The entrepreneur may display embarrassment and even fear whilst the critic will display disgust and contempt. Thus being able to read the interactions between the two is important. The entrepreneur may be uncharacteristically quite or prone to launch into a diatribe. The differences in behaviour may be subtle and not noticeable.

The notion of narrative scripts is not alien to entrepreneurship theory. Indeed, Smith (2005) explored the social construction of what he referred to as the “Storybook Entrepreneur” schema in fiction and biography and established that there is a storybook formula whereby the ambitious entrepreneur succumbs to hubris, which is followed closely by the hounding, haunting and humbling scenarios in which failure, shame and embarrassment play a role in the physical and psychological destruction of the

⁵ Ekman (2003: 50) highlights the difference between emotions and moods. Both involve feelings but emotions are short lived whilst moods persist. Euphoria and depression are destabilizing bipolar moods.

entrepreneur. This latter fact is significant because Kaplan and Pokorny (1969) refer to a process of self-derogation which fits in with the notion of a man-in-crisis being hounded by critics and internalising the drama which becomes a self haunting process leading to a humbling. This can lead to an unleashing of negative emotions such as culpability, helplessness, anger, self-pity and worthlessness.. It is fitting to end this review on the subject of narrative scripts or schemas because in the next section we return to the pages of fiction to examine how personal tragedy and shame are portrayed in fictional entrepreneurs..

3. Examining the roles of tragedy and shame in novels of entrepreneur in crisis

Novels are an especially rich but overlooked medium as data sources on entrepreneurs because they present the entrepreneurs as subjects and the medium enables authors to introduce negative storylines to counterbalance the clichéd storylines we associate with entrepreneur stories. It is in such stories that the social settings in which entrepreneurial activity as envisaged by Goss (2005) flourishes

The brief review of the genre of tragic entrepreneur novels narrated below is but one possible reading of the dark side of entrepreneurial personality. An illustration of this relates to a case of contemplated suicide narrated in the novel as evidenced by the following quote from 'The Entrepreneur' (I. G. Broat, 1978) - *"I waited up there until the sky darkened before I climbed again onto the parapet. I found a perch and sat, content, the great chasm of space beneath me, watching the fairyland of illuminations coming on*

in every direction. Slowly, the London that had born me became a carpet of light. I began to shout, telling the whole world down there what I'd done. But they were too far away to hear". Thus narrates Broats fictional entrepreneur and property tycoon Alex Caradine, as he sat on the roof of his failed office block complex business after the bank had foreclosed on his loan, staring into the abyss, contemplating whether to jump or not. We are minded of the words of Nietzsche - *'The thought of suicide is a great consolation: by means of it one gets successfully through many a bad night'* Nietzsche (1986).

Nor is this tragic figure of the failed entrepreneur in novels unique as illustrated by the following case of death as a result of unresolved shame narrated in the in the Novel Max Britsky (Fast, 1983) in which the fictional entrepreneur Max died a broken man in the very Cinema in which he had began his rise from rags to riches to become Movie Mogul and property tycoon - an ironic end to a motivated man who was single-minded in business but misfortunate in life. This tragic entrepreneur suffered a series of failed marriages and bitter children, a hostile business takeover and friends who deserted him in his time of crisis. A further example of a tragic descent into madness can be found in the novel *An American Dreamer* (Millhauser, 1997) in which the fictional entrepreneur, Martin Dressler who after having built up a hotel empire from the lowly position of bellboy, lost everything as he became mentally ill and shunned by family and friends. Likewise, Likewise ends the tale of fictional entrepreneur Joseph Frances Xavier Armagh in Caldwell's novel who bereaving the loss of his mother, his brother, his sons, his marriage and peace of mind all apparently at his own hands, having dared to rise above the rest – to become Nietzsche's *déracine* man. The plot is presented as a case of just deserts for daring to dream.

Being an entrepreneur is obviously an emotive business. Suicide, death, madness and despair - all apparently the fate of those who dare to tempt fate by overstepping their mark. From childhood, in nursery rhyme we are told the fate of Humpty Dumpty - *“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall; All the King's horses and all the King's men, Couldn't put Humpty together again”* (Traditional Rhyme). Likewise in myth we learn the fate of the fanciful Icarus who dared to fly too close to the sun ignoring the advice of his father Daedalus. These cultural novels, rhymes and myths are all cautionary tales and admonitions' against over-reaching and failing. Thus they set up powerful emotive, social scripts warning against these dangers. The links between entrepreneurship, failure and psychological breakdown are obviously powerful in narrative. This sad litany of stories and fables explains more about the social construction of entrepreneurs than it does about dealing with stress and emotions of everyday entrepreneuring. Or does it? This is difficult to answer without researching how prevalent the storyline is in real life.

Notwithstanding the identified dearth of actual empirical studies, the negative aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour can be implicitly understood and associated in 'flawed hero narratives' which emphasise hubris, tragedy, narcissism, over-stretching, hedonism, personality disorders, relationship problems, status anxiety, self-centeredness, destructive behavioural patterns, alcoholism, suicide and business failure. But then why should we always expect an entrepreneur story to end with the entrepreneur in crisis staring into the abyss as in the tale of Alex Carradine above? The truth may well be that in eulogising

the entrepreneur as a hero figure we prefer to listen to the inspirational tales of the poor-boy-making good, of rags-to-riches, of the child prodigy, of overcoming adversity, blighted education or ethnic disadvantage. It does not appear to matter that these hallowed storylines may belong to a bygone age.

Even if one does not buy into social constructionist theories and the scripted storylines perpetuated in the media, shame can still be considered as a process of withdrawal from self and narrative (Smith, 2006). When entrepreneurs suffer stress and shame it is not uncommon for them to uncouple themselves from their normal social scripts of survival and from engagement with entrepreneurial narrative at a philosophical level. They may thus distance themselves from their personal entrepreneur story as they learn to live in the nightmare of the social pariah. This process is known as domain disconnection. The 'disconnect' may only be temporary. It takes time to recover from severe episodes of shame, but there are many mechanisms which can be used to help the recovery process. Some are behavioural, indeed, Ekman (2003: 56) discusses the emotional mechanism of 'stonewalling' which many men are prone to utilize in the face of stress to shut out painful stimuli. This is a particularly masculine trait because time can be a healer when one becomes yesterday's news. Yet other coping mechanisms are processual, such as described by Thompson, Altmann and Davidson (2004) who found that individuals who are undergoing recovery from episodes of shame often spend less time on unicursal tasks, attempt fewer items and solve fewer problems. In an entrepreneurial setting this could lead to a debilitating spiral of anti-entrepreneurial behaviour. It may be necessary for the

failed entrepreneur to find another therapeutic avenue for their need to achieve (McClelland, 1960).

This distancing of self from narrated identity is fascinating. Fisher (2009) building upon personal experience and a family history of business failure as well as success discusses the darker side of being an entrepreneur and talks of psychological trauma and hardship one must overcome to succeed. Avoiding impending disaster is a key theme. Fisher talks of anguish and of ensuring that entrepreneurship does not kill one's spirit and destroy lives. Interestingly, Fisher's chapter headings are inspired by emotions and the chapters tell stories of perseverance and sacrifice. Fischer believes that as individuals we refuse to learn from the failures of others. But help is at hand, because Shumake (2009) in his book for entrepreneurs contemplating suicide proffers advice. Whilst it is not the purpose of this paper to report on such advice but the link between recession, depression and suicide is an important one. Shumake notes that the fortunate ones refer their selves for help and describes the warning signs as being low self esteem, change in behaviour / personality, constant talking about death, etc. Indeed, Johnson (2006) remarks that suicide amongst entrepreneurs is higher than in the average mean for the population. Johnson blames the executive lifestyle for not being conducive to general well-being with a high exposure to excessive stress, overwork caused by too much adrenaline and testosterone, and not enough physical exercise. He talks of a cycle of alcohol abuse that can ensue. Johnson also discusses health issues such as obesity and strokes. Again these issues are beyond the remit of this paper but help build up a conceptual picture surrounding shame.

There are many measures of detecting shame such as the global adjective checklist; the internalized shame scale, and appropriately for this study schema theory and scenario based measures. We advocate narrative based measures for benchmarking ones emotional condition against the narratives of others in a similar state of shame. The issue is fraught with questions and dilemmas for example - is the onset of hubris leading to crisis and ultimately meltdown and emotional side effects such as shame what Thompson (1999) referred to as the price of greatness? Or is it merely a fallible human emotion which can be understood and dealt with sensibly? There are theoretical, conceptual, methodological and ethical issues to consider but from a reading of the theoretical literatures of shame and tragedy and from popular literature and myth, novels, biography and from our research conducted via the internet it is possible to develop a conceptual model of the role of shame in entrepreneur stories. This deliberate 'disconnect' from individual to genre is an important part of the element because it is easier to identify with the character of a story than with an as yet unresolved reality. In the following section we move on to examine real life examples of examples of entrepreneurs in social settings where they are experiencing emotional meltdown as portrayed in the media. It is of note that we are again dealing with stories because the currency of media lies in retelling stories which are of interest to readers, listeners and viewers.

5. In search of the entrepreneur in crisis in media depictions of reality

To test whether the tragic entrepreneur storylines discussed above have prevalence in real life we conducted tentative research via the internet to try and establish if there were sufficient examples of such extreme behaviour affecting entrepreneurs in real life to

justify the veracity of the storylines. Our research located forty examples of narratives of entrepreneurs in crisis from across the globe. As a result of constant comparative analyses based on emerging categories we divided these into three main types, or classifications - extreme psychological meltdown, personal psychological meltdown and a third category of the disgraced entrepreneur. We accept that there may be other categories but these are unlikely to be news worthy. Table 1, provides details of the pertinent facts of the cases.

Take in Table 1 about here

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To avoid embarrassment to the families of the entrepreneurs involved no reference has been cited to the newspaper and internet articles located. This profiling technique is a necessary cut off mechanism to avoid perpetuating the flawed hero model of entrepreneurship as well as to avoid ethical academic dilemmas in researching controversial issues. In all the categories, there is an underlying behavioural facet such as bi-polar disease or depression. Common triggers include the recession, divorce and the ensuing personal and financial problems, unresolved personal issues, a failure to take ownership of deeply personal addictions and in a few cases impending debilitating illnesses. In all the categories newspaper accounts used emotive descriptors such as shamed, disgraced and broken. The damage is to financial and reputational integrity and may be irreversible. In all the articles mention was made of the shame and guilt born by the entrepreneur and collectively by their families. In the majority of cases the distressed entrepreneur is male. Only one example located was female. Clearly the entrepreneurs undergoing a personal crisis who find themselves in a state of mental meltdown are often not in a position to seek help because they do not recognize that they have become detached from reality and this will clearly remain a problem. However, the entrepreneurs in disgrace could benefit from an appreciation that there is no shame in failure or in succumbing to many human foibles which carry social stigma. Therefore the tentative conceptual model presented above may be of assistance to them in recovering from crises and the shock of fallibility. Although the table only demonstrates a tentative prevalence it illustrates the need for a larger research project into the negative aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour including mental or physical breakdown as evidenced in the stories of entrepreneurs. Clearly although the tragic, flawed entrepreneur template has

some basis in fact it is neither a compulsory, nor desirable narrative to perpetuate. We now turn to develop a conceptual model of shame in an entrepreneurial context.

6. Developing a conceptual model illustrating the role of shame in entrepreneur stories

From the above review of the literature coupled with the tentative empirical research it is possible to construct a narrative based model of shame which can be used by scholars and entrepreneurs alike to situate themselves in the story and thereby better understand negative aspects of being trapped in the nightmare that surrounds being an entrepreneur in crisis. Figure 1 below encapsulates many of the theories, themes and stories we have encountered to this point.

Take in fig 1 about here

The conceptual model laid out above requires clarification. The model begins with the entrepreneur in a state of grace. If the entrepreneur encounters a crisis in which pride turns into hubris then a fall from grace into disgrace usually occurs. This is known in mythology as the fallen angel syndrome in which atonement is necessary to recover. If the balance is not restored then the entrepreneur may experience a hounding from external sources such as creditors or detractors. This may also lead to an internal form of self criticism known as the haunting in which the entrepreneur experiences feelings of self-doubt. Many entrepreneurs do not succumb to the humbling and can return to normality quickly. If not, a loss of face and self-confidence can result in social and professional embarrassment and a loss of legitimacy. At this stage guilt and shame kick

in. However, if there is no sense of personal blame the entrepreneur may express anger and frustration but be able to negotiate their passage back to normality by expressing feelings of regret and by acts of penance and penury. If this is accompanied by an acceptance of blame and by a course of direct and decisive action and even an apology then the entrepreneur may be able to move on. A comeback and a reestablishment of legitimacy can result. From there it is a short step back to entrepreneur status and a return to grace. If however, there are unresolved feelings of blame then paranoia, irrationality can occur. In extreme cases, a rapid disengagement from self, narrative and reality can occur. In a small minority of cases suicide and murder can be unleashed. This slough of despondency can be humiliating and can result in personality changes. It is also a zone where character building failure stories are generated for later use. In the majority of cases a downwards spiral is inevitable but temporary as a loss of self-confidence leads into self-pity. The entrepreneur has entered the domain of tragedy and has to negotiate a tortuous path back to recovery. The entrepreneur has to navigate the healing cycle from hubris, mimesis, harmatia, anagnorsis back to peripety. This can be accompanied by destructive feelings of pity, rage, despair and often abusive behaviours such as excessive alcohol consumption. A further dip in confidence levels can lead to the entrepreneur being viewed as a social outcast. In this phase mistakes are common and create a self-perpetuating cycle of doubt. At this stage if the entrepreneur does not accept responsibility for their part in their downfall then feelings of being wronged may mean that they have to exit and change careers. However acceptance even at this late stage can lead to a comeback and return to legitimacy.

As can be seen the conceptual model illustrates possible pathways to recovery which can be used to narrate new beginnings. It could be used by scholars to better understand to the complex psycho-social processes involved in the unravelling of the entrepreneurial process. Likewise, entrepreneurs can self analyse their inner turmoil by comparing their feelings and progress against the conceptual model. Even reading about the experiences of others can be therapeutic and cathartic.

7. Some concluding thoughts on the conceptual model

This paper has made a tentative contribution to the literature by considering and discussing 1) negative entrepreneurial states of being; 2) the possibility of less heroic entrepreneur stories such as for example failure stories and cautionary tales; 3) and finally uniting the literatures of shame, hubris and tragedy. Moreover, it has made a contribution in producing a protean conceptual model of the role of shame in entrepreneur stories and by conducting preliminary research into actual cases of tragic meltdown (albeit the using a small sample size). Obviously there are limitations to the conceptual model. Firstly the fact that it makes a conceptual as opposed to a theoretical contribution. Secondly that it is perhaps slightly tautological in nature as it is based on collecting data from stories as opposed to interviews with respondents. Thirdly, the small sample size of novels and real life cases also inhibits a deeper more quantitatively verifiable understanding of the data to develop. Injecting methodological rigour into a conceptual article is an even more daunting task. The fact that the model requires a textual explanation to work and is open to interpretation is somewhat limiting.

Developing a new conceptual model is difficult particularly in relation to shame because it is not a linear construct but an emotive one based on narrative scripting – therefore the resultant illustrative thematics may not possess a clear logical flow. Associated ideas may appear as if introduced in an incoherent manner without having been introduced or called out in the text, almost like fleeting thoughts. This may be problematic on one hand particularly in a conceptual model constructed from lists of empirical findings, ideas, and references presented out of their original context and without persuasive arguments that tie these together. On the other hand, the model mirrors the chaos and confusion of entrepreneurial life practices and processes. Be this as it may, this paper adds to the growing literature stream on 'affect' in entrepreneurship studies by re-contextualising the literature on shame in an entrepreneurial setting. Moreover, it illustrates why there is a need for the paper based on consideration of the paucity of extant literature.

The constructed model can be used to map a number of possible entrepreneurial trajectories that take cognisance of wellbeing issues and cover the unspoken about events that occur after a fall from grace. The model thus has a multiple utility in that it will be of interest to academics and entrepreneurs

This paper has only scratched the surface of possible studies into the hubris-shame-tragedy nexus and indeed there is a need to conduct further empirical, conceptual, theoretical and practical research into the concept to delineate its importance to entrepreneurship. Betta, Latham and Jones (2007) refer to the pride-shame bridge. Future research projects could include - a thorough empirical study into the profile of

entrepreneurs suffering from stress and emotional and mental breakdown; more detailed quantitative studies into suicide statistics and reduced social mobility amongst the entrepreneurial classes; detailed case studies of high profile entrepreneurs affected by stress and breakdown; and qualitative in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs who have undergone a breakdown and have recovered. Such studies would increase the level of knowledge and collectively could provide the grounding for a defensible theory of entrepreneurial crisis.

Nevertheless, shame is a powerful personal emotion which can lead to a temporary state of helplessness. This temporary state is a necessary one for full recovery to occur so the presence of an explanatory conceptual model is an important first step. Until we as a society accept this and learn to tell different, more realistic entrepreneur stories then the depressing and unavoidable statistics of personal failure will stalk generations of entrepreneurs too come. We as entrepreneurship scholars have a role to play in this re-education process. The fictional personas of Alex Caradine, Max Britsky, Martin Dressler and Joseph Francis Xavier Armagh, Icarus, Humpty Dumpty and Nietzsche's *déracine* man are not the only role models. The flawed entrepreneur need not embrace the tragic storyline – there is life and a future after the fall!

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Table 1 – examples of emotional meltdown

Type	Examples of behaviour	Incidences
Extreme	The authors encountered five examples of entrepreneurs (from 3 5different continents) who overcome by the shame of losing their businesses and pride killed their selves and murdered their families.	3
Psychological Meltdown	Often there is a personal element with obsessive behaviour such as gambling, or a descent into criminality in a bid to stave of ruination.	6
Personal meltdown	This is a less extreme but still fatal category which involves suicide	8
Disgrace	Criminal or involved in fraud or other financial chicanery such as Insider trading. Common themes are bankruptcy and imprisonment.	20

Figure 1 – A Conceptual Model of the role of shame in entrepreneur stories

